

Manzanar Relocation Center Cemetery

Manzanar National Historic Site



Toyo Miyatake ca. 1944

The relocation center cemetery serves as a poignant reminder that some of the 10,000 Japanese Americans interned at Manzanar would never see their homes again. Over 135 internees died at Manzanar during its operation as a relocation center. While many were sent to their home towns for burial, some were buried in a small plot of land just outside the relocation center security fence. Historic accounts suggest that as few as 15 or as many as 80 people may have been buried at the cemetery. When the relocation center closed, in many cases the families of the deceased removed the remains of their loved ones for reburial elsewhere. But historic documents suggest that at least six people were still buried at the cemetery in January 1946: three were bachelors in their 60s who had no relatives in the U.S., two were babies whose parents were sent to the Tule Lake Segregation Center before the internment ended, and one was an unidentified stillborn baby.

The Cemetery Monument

In 1943 the Manzanar internees decided to erect a monument to honor their dead. Skilled stonemason Ryozo Kado was recruited to supervise the work. Mr. Kado, who before internment had been a landscaper and stonemason for the Los Angeles Catholic diocese, had also designed and supervised the construction of the sentry and police posts which still stand at the original entrance. Mr. Kado agreed to build the memorial only if all internees approved; he must have obtained their consent, because it has been recorded that each family contributed \$0.15 to purchase cement for the memorial. Construction of the monument was completed by Block 9 residents and members of the Buddhist Young People's organization.



HABS 1994

The three characters on the front (east side) of the cemetery monument literally translate as "soul consoling tower" (*I REI TO*). More liberal translations include "memorial to the dead," "monument to console the souls of the dead," and "this is the place of consolation for the spirit of all mankind." On the back (west side) the left-hand column reads "Erected by the Manzanar Japanese," the right-hand column "August 1943."

The Cemetery Today

By the time the Historic Site was established in 1992, it was not clear how many graves remained, or where they were. Grave markers had been lost or moved over the years. In some areas, it was not known whether clusters of rocks indicated graves or some other feature. It was also possible that a barbed wire fence built by the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power in the 1970s to protect the cemetery might have inadvertently excluded some of the grave sites.

Archaeological excavations, undertaken with great care and respect, were conducted to relocate the grave sites so they could be properly marked and protected. This work determined that there had been only 15 graves in the cemetery originally and that only the six individuals mentioned in historic documents remained. The excavations also identified the precise location of the original cemetery fence, so that it could be reconstructed accurately.

Using historical photographs and archaeological evidence, in 2001 the National Park Service built a replica of the original locust wood fence that had been built by internees. All of the grave locations were outlined with rocks, although originally most of the graves were marked only by a small headstone or wood post.

Manzanar Pilgrimage

For over 30 years the cemetery has been the focal point of the annual Manzanar Pilgrimage, held the last Saturday of April. The event features an interfaith memorial service, guided tours, displays, presentations, and music. For more information on pilgrimage events contact the Manzanar Committee, 1566 Curran Street, Los Angeles, California 90026 (phone 323-662-5102).

Jeff Burton 1993

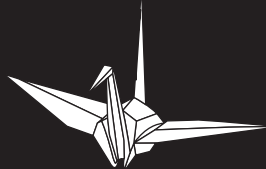


Jeff Burton 2000



マンザナ収容所墓地

マンザナ国定史跡



Dorothea Lange 1942



Dale Myer 1968



Ansel Adams 1943

1. Grave of Matsunosuke Murakami, a widower age 62, who died of pneumonia on May 16, 1942. A former farm laborer, he was at Manzanar 54 days before his death. His was the first burial in the cemetery. The headstone and rock border are original.

2. Former grave of Sachiko Sawamura, who died on November 26, 1942, at the age of 6 months of tuberculosis-related meningitis.

3. Former grave of Midori Takayama. The headstone, which is original, reads "Passed away November 21, 1942, Grave of Midori Takayama, 22 years old." The wood fence around the grave site is a reconstruction based on historic photographs. A married housewife, Mrs. Takayama was at Manzanar 5 months, two of which was spent in the hospital, before she died of acute cardiac failure resulting from pulmonary edema.

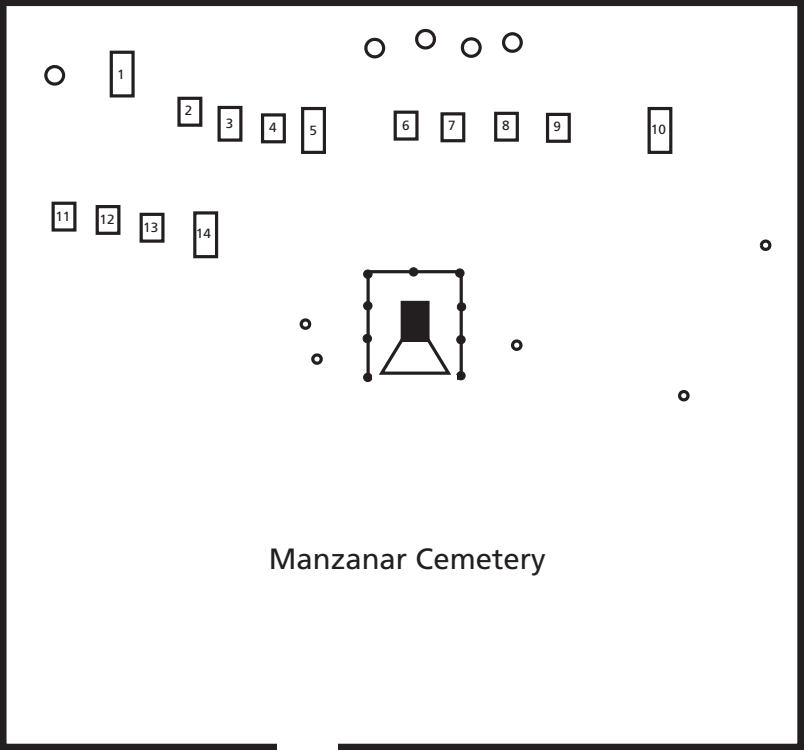
4. Former grave of Toshiro Nozawa, who died at birth on January 1, 1943.

5. Grave of Minoru Kihara, age 63, who died November 27, 1942, of shock from a massive hemorrhage of a gastric ulcer. A laborer, he was at Manzanar 8 months prior to his death. The wood grave post is original.

6. Former grave of Edna Hitowi Muraoka, a baby, who died on August 16, 1942, of unspecified causes.

7. Former gave of an unnamed baby who died at birth February 27, 1943. The parents were Mr. and Mrs. Wataru Sakamoto.

8. Grave of Noriyuki Arasuna. Born 5½ months premature, he died on July 20, 1943. His parents were later transferred from Manzanar to the Tule Lake Segregation Center. The grave post is original.



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9. Grave of Midori Susan Furuya, a premature baby who died August 14, 1943. Her parents were transferred to Tule Lake. The grave post is a reproduction based on historic photographs.

10. Grave of Shinnojo Fukumoto, age 62. He died on December 19, 1944, of uremia. A cook, he was at Manzanar 2½ years before his death. The grave post is a reproduction.

11. Former grave of Roy Hasegawa, a premature baby who died April 4, 1942. He was the son of U.S. Army Pvt. Sam Hasegawa and Mrs. Yoshiko Hasegawa.

12. Former grave of Tetsuo Kusaba. The infant son of Mr. and Mrs. Torasuka Kusaba, he died April 25, 1943.

13. Former grave of Toshiro Gerald Ogata. He died on October 15, 1943, at the age of 2 months, of a congenital

heart defect. The headstone is a replacement for a concrete headstone stolen from the cemetery in the 1980s.

14. Former grave of George Kaechi Takeuchi, age 69, who died January 31, 1944, of complications of Parkinson's disease. Married, a cook, he had spent his entire 11 months at Manzanar in the hospital.

The fifteenth individual buried at the cemetery was a stillborn baby who was buried in an unmarked grave and the record is listed as confidential. Other rock circles in the cemetery denote the former locations of trees or are recent memorials. One includes an offering to those killed in the Manzanar Riot, placed by Harry Ueno in 1991. To the north of the cemetery fence is the pet cemetery. The internees were not allowed to bring any of their pets with them, but they soon acquired new pets from stray dogs and cats and animals given to them by local residents.



Dick Lord 2001

Before the Cemetery

The area selected for the relocation center cemetery lay within an old orchard, planted by the Owens Valley Improvement Company. Organized in 1910, this company began a small farming community at Manzanar with state-of-the-art irrigation systems, including the concrete pipe shown at left exposed during archeological investigations. Peach trees once grew in the area that would later become the relocation center cemetery, and apple trees grew to the east. The town's name "Manzanar," Spanish for apple orchard, reflected the townspeople's hope that the settlement would become a fruitful garden community. Yet by the 1930s, the town was abandoned. Many of the orchard trees in the cemetery vicinity were still alive into the 1940s, and were tended by the internees.

The small obsidian arrow point illustrated to the upper right was found near a centuries-old roasting pit discovered within the cemetery, indicating that this area figured into the Owens Valley Paiute's diverse economy, which included irrigation of native plants, collection of other plant foods, hunting, and long-distance trade. The larger arrow point was recovered during construction of the cemetery fence. It suggests the valley inhabitants were hunting in what is now the cemetery area as much as 1400 years ago.



WACC 2001

Toyo Miyatake ca. 1944

For further information contact:
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or visit Manzanar's internet site:
www.nps.gov/manz